

And I thought to myself I wished that spirit could kind of somehow capture America. And at the end of my visit with this man he said to me how grateful he was for the help he'd received, how grateful he was for everyone treating him as they had. And then he said, "It's just too bad that we don't behave this way toward each other all the time." And I think that's an important lesson that we could take out of the work that FEMA and all of you have done. The teamwork, the spirit of can-do, the openness to doing what has to be done, the total lack of cynicism that you see in the midst of a disaster and taking care of its aftermath, that's really what this country needs all day, every day. When America works together we never lose; and if we don't, we beat ourselves.

So I want to say again to all of you how grateful I am to you. I know the American people look to you, your Governors, to James Lee, and to me when they need us in these disasters. I know that they rise to the challenges they rarely do on a daily basis when a disaster occurs. And I just want to tell you how grateful I am to you for your public service and how I want to encourage you to continue to imbue the spirit of service that you demonstrate in times of disasters every day, every week, all year long.

Congratulations for all the good work you do. Have a successful conference, and let's hope and pray that for the rest of this year you won't have quite so much to do as you have had in the beginning.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Announcing Sanctions Against Cuba Following the Downing of Brothers to the Rescue Airplanes

February 26, 1996

Good afternoon. Two days ago, in broad daylight and without justification, Cuban military aircraft shot down two civilian planes in international airspace. Search and rescue efforts by the Coast Guard, which began immediately after we received word of the inci-

dent, have failed to find any of the four individuals who were aboard the airplanes.

These small airplanes were unarmed and clearly so. Cuban authorities knew that. The planes posed no credible threat to Cuba's security. Although the group that operated the planes had entered Cuban airspace in the past on other flights, this is no excuse for the attack, and provides—let me emphasize—no legal basis under international law for the attack. We must be clear: This shooting of civilian aircraft out of the air was a flagrant violation of international law. It is wrong, and the United States will not tolerate it.

Saturday's attack is further evidence that Havana has become more desperate in its efforts to deny freedom to the people of Cuba. Also on Saturday the Cuban Council, a broad group that wants to bring democracy to Cuba, had planned a day of peaceful discussion and debate. Instead, in the days leading up to this gathering, scores of activists were arrested and detained. Two have already been sentenced to long prison terms. They join about 1,000 others in Cuba who are in jail solely because of their desire for freedom. Now the downing of these planes demands a firm response from both the United States and the international community. I am pleased that the European Union today strongly condemned the action.

Last night, on my instructions, Ambassador Albright convened an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council to condemn the Cuban action and to present the case for sanctions on Cuba until it agrees to abide by its obligation to respect civilian aircraft and until it compensates the families of the victims.

Today, I am also ordering the following unilateral actions. First, I am asking that Congress pass legislation that will provide immediate compensation to the families, something to which they are entitled under international law, out of Cuba's blocked assets here in the United States. If Congress passes this legislation, we can provide the compensation immediately.

Second, I will move promptly to reach agreement with the Congress on the pending Helms-Burton Cuba legislation so that it will enhance the effectiveness of the embargo in

a way that advances the cause of democracy in Cuba.

Third, I have ordered that Radio Marti expand its reach. All the people of Cuba must be able to learn the truth about the regime in Havana—the isolation it has earned for itself through its contempt for basic human rights and international law.

Fourth, I am ordering that additional restrictions be put on travel in the United States by Cuban officials who reside here, and that visits by Cuban officials to our country be further limited.

Finally, all charter air travel from the United States to Cuba will be suspended indefinitely.

These deliberate actions are the right ones at this time. They respond to Havana in a way that serves our goals of accelerating the arrival of democracy in Cuba. But I am not ruling out any further steps in the future, should they be required.

Saturday's attack was an appalling reminder of the nature of the Cuban regime: repressive, violent, scornful of international law. In our time, democracy has swept the globe, from the Philippines exactly 10 years ago, to Central and Eastern Europe, to South Africa, to Haiti, to all but one nation in our hemisphere. I will do everything in my power to see that this historic tide reaches the shores of Cuba. And let me close by extending on behalf of our family and our country our deepest condolences to those in the families of those who lost their lives.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Proclamation 6866—American Red Cross Month, 1996

February 26, 1996

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Since its founding in 1881 by Clara Barton, the American Red Cross has brought hope and healing to citizens and communities across the country. Today, some 1.4 million trained volunteers work to fulfill the Red Cross' mission by providing relief to disaster

victims; by ensuring that our Nation has an adequate and safe blood supply; by training millions of Americans in essential lifesaving and safety techniques; and by assisting members of our Armed Forces, their families, and our distinguished veterans.

This past year, the American Red Cross has carried on its extraordinary legacy across the country and around the world. When a bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, the Red Cross was there within minutes to assist those whose loved ones were killed in the tragic blast. After a series of record-breaking storms and hurricanes ruined houses and displaced people, the Red Cross served more than a million meals and helped victims to begin rebuilding their lives. And today, as OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR works to secure the peace in Bosnia, the Red Cross is facilitating emergency communications between our troops and their families at home.

The Red Cross has earned our Nation's deepest respect and appreciation for its important lifesaving and life-rebuilding work and for its countless daily efforts to promote health and safety. This month and throughout the year, let us take time to recognize this vital organization and do all we can to further its goals of preventing, preparing for, and responding to emergencies.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 1996, as American Red Cross Month. I urge all the people of the United States to support Red Cross chapters nationwide by volunteering and participating in Red Cross blood drives.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William J. Clinton

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